

VDH - Septic and Well Assistance Program

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Version: 4/20/2022

1. The [SWAP website](#) addresses that funding will be used for households at 200% of Federal Poverty Guidelines. Just wondering if there is any flexibility for non-profits.
 - a. **VDH Answer:** No. Homes and the land on which they sit must be owned by households that meet the above listed income threshold.
2. Can the funds be used to replace or repair an onsite sewage system for a registered non-profit? If yes, how would you apply the poverty guidelines to them?
 - a. **VDH Answer:** No. Homes and the land on which they sit must be owned by households that meet the above listed income threshold..
3. If no onsite sewage disposal system can be installed, can the funds be used to install a pump and haul? (or) If an old dirt privy exists even a vault privy? In some cases, this may be all that can be installed, but it is still better than the existing conditions.
 - a. **VDH Answer:** Yes provided the county has entered into a contract with the Commissioner for permanent pump and haul. The ongoing pump-outs would not be covered under the SWAP, only the construction cost (labor and materials).
4. If a home has a privy and no-indoor plumbing, can the funds be used for plumbing/bathroom construction in the home? For households that have a privy, without indoor plumbing (bathroom) the new onsite sewage system won't mean much.
 - a. **VDH Answer:** No. SWAP funds cannot be used to make interior improvements to the home. If an onsite sewage system can be installed the SWAP could be used for the onsite sewage system installation. Assistance for indoor plumbing improvement may be available through the housing authority with installation of a regulatory compliant onsite sewage system. Other partner organizations that may be able to provide funding assistance for indoor plumbing and other structural improvements are SERCAP and VHCD.
5. I believe ARPA requires the funds to be encumbered by Dec 2024, and construction to be completed by Dec 2026. Does this mean Virginia residents can apply for the SWAP funds (if still available) up to Dec 2024?
 - a. **VDH Answer:** For direct funded projects we would need to have the quick quote process completed by December 31, 2024, so we'll stop accepting applications prior to that date. For the Local Partner funding we anticipate completing several rounds of Request for Applications in 2022, and have all associated sub awards awarded by April 2023. All grantees must obligate all of their on-the ground funds (for best management practices) by December 2024 and all in-ground work finish by June 2025.
6. The website says 50% of funds will be given to local partners to implement the SWAP program. Is there any additional information on this? Such as who can be a local partner, how the funds will be appropriated, reporting requirements, and so on?
 - a. **VDH Answer:** A Request for Applications (RFA) is currently open through 4/27/2022. Future RFA's may be released pending the availability of funds. Information on eligible local partners can be found under the "Apply – Local Partners" at this website:
<https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/environmental-health/swap/>
7. Alternative system operation and maintenance is listed on the SWAP site as something that can be funded. Is this funding for "one" annual inspection or what is this covering?
 - a. **VDH Answer:** If an alternative onsite sewage system manufacturer includes several years of maintenance in the purchase price of the unit, then SWAP funds would cover that cost as part of the installation cost. For manufacturers that do not include those costs, we are working on details of how we can provide that service during the grant period.
8. Since funds can be applied for septic operation and maintenance, can it also be provided for well testing and, if necessary, disinfection of the well? If necessary can funds cover installation of permanent disinfection (e.g U.V.)?

VDH - Septic and Well Assistance Program

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Version: 4/20/2022

- a. **VDH Answer:** We are paying for well replacements and connection to public water. We would cover any cost of testing of the new well and other associated costs of that installation, However, SWAP funds are not available for just installing a treatment unit or testing a well.
9. This program is already available to homeowners and we helped promote this recently to get the word out. What is the goal of this pot of money (Local Partners) - to select agencies that will be pass-through to homeowners?
 - a. **VDH Answer:** The distinction between the Direct Funding program to homeowners and the Local Partners funding program is that in the former VDH serves as the direct conduit to homeowners to receive assistance (actually engaging contractors and service providers on behalf of the homeowner). In the latter the local partners will serve as administrator of a local program and provide the services directly to the homeowners. Local governments and organizations may be better positioned than VDH to reach and serve local populations in need of financial assistance for failing septic and water systems. The goal of the two programs is to complement each other, not compete. Ultimately the goal of the program, via either method, is to provide assistance and service to all qualifying homeowners within the Commonwealth of Virginia.
10. Is SWAP Local Partner Funding available for a non-profit or governmental entity that owns properties that it rents to low income households?
 - a. **VDH Answer:** Eligibility for the program is based upon the income verification of whoever owns the property in question that is going to receive the waste/water system improvements. Eligibility is not based upon who is or will live in a home if they do not own the structure/property/systems.
11. What is eligibility based upon? How is income determined?
 - a. **VDH Answer:** VDH utilizes the 2022 Federal Health and Human Services Department 2022 Federal Poverty Guidelines (FPG) to determine eligibility. Homeowners whose income is at or below 200% (2 times the FPG) are eligible. Eligibility is based upon income verification of the family unit or economic unit that legally owns the home and associated property for which waste/water improvements are needed. The SWAP utilizes the process outlined in the VDH “Eligibility and Charging Structure Guidance Document” to verify income and determine eligibility.
12. Are Homeowner Associations and similar entities eligible to apply through the local partner RFA?
 - a. **VDH Answer:** All legally recognized organizations that meet the eligibility criteria in the RFA can apply. In the case of Homeowner Associations and similar groups, may need to be a non-profits to be eligible. The funds any local partner receives must be distributed to homeowners that meet the income guidelines.
13. I have a question regarding the Septic and Well Assistance Program Local Partners with Immediate Projects RFA. Can you please advise the total amount of funding available through this program? Page 1 of the attached RFA states \$2.85 million is available, however, page 2 states \$5.75 million is available.
 - a. **VDH Answer:** For the current RFA the amount available is \$2.85 million. However the program in total will have \$5.75 million available for Local Partner projects, the remainder of which will be distributed through subsequent RFAs.
14. Running new sewer lines to low-income areas or installing a single pump station can cost more than the entire funding allocation for a region. How much funding in the RFA is being held back for the second round? With the \$300,000 cap, running a public sewer will never happen.
 - a. **VDH Answer:** VDH's SWAP funds are only eligible for septic and well funds directly to assist homeowners. SWAP funds can not be used to run sewer extension lines or pump stations. Other funding opportunities, such as DEQ's Cleanwater Financing and Assistance Program which received \$75 million of ARPA funds, may be able to fund sewer line and pump station upgrades. SWAP can fund the costs associated with connecting a home to public water/sewer when

VDH - Septic and Well Assistance Program

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Version: 4/20/2022

- replacing a failing onsite sewage system or private well. VDH will have specifications posted that will be available at the time the awards are executed that would describe what would be required (and fundable). Regarding additional funds, this RFA round is \$2.85 million and is intended for those partners with experience working in this program area and who could develop an application in a short turn around (April 27) so that executed agreements could potentially start July 1, 2022. In total the SWAP Local Partner funds total \$5.75 million. VDH plans to issue additional RFA in May 2022 for the remaining funds for projects that would start on or after October 2022.
15. Is there a copy of the RFA webinar or frequently asked questions?
- a. **VDH Answer:** The recording of the webinar held April 1, 2022 can be found here: Webinar Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yphGBF6YbPU>. A copy of these frequently asked questions will be available on the SWAP website: <https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/environmental-health/swap/>
16. I can only imagine what engineered secondary treatment system costs are going to rise to, we normally finance those from \$15,000-\$25,000+. Since these funds are ARPA recovery funds, there should not be any limits on unit costs?
- a. **VDH Answer:** VDH SWAP funds do not have a cap on the funds available per type of system. There is a soft cap of \$40,000. Projects that exceed that cost may require further review and approval by the VDH SWAP program. However, making sure the prices paid are reasonable and are based upon competitive bids will be expected (as is any time working with federal funds). One of the key points of the program is to maximize the funding that can go to homeowners to fix failing onsite septic systems and private wells. The efficiencies garnered by using the most economically practical solutions while being fully protective of human health and the environment is encouraged
17. Are publicly owned residential units that are already built and occupied with tenants that meet the 200% income level eligible for participation to replace or upgrade well and septic?
- a. **VDH Answer:** To be eligible for assistance under VDH's SWAP an applicant must be at or below the 200% federal poverty level and must own both the house and the land on which the house is situated. Please refer to our website for further guidelines "Eligibility is based upon income verification of the family unit or economic unit that legally owns the home and associated property for which wastewater/water improvements are needed. The SWAP uses the process outlined in the VDH "Eligibility and Charging Structure Guidance Document" to verify income and determine eligibility."
18. Are new units that are being built that will serve tenants that meet the 200% income level eligible for participation to replace or upgrade well and septic? Would these units being constructed be eligible if the government unit voluntarily elected to upgrade to pretreatment? Would these new units be eligible for well if the well drilled indicated that the "flow" was going to be a concern and needed upgrades or multiple wells
- a. **VDH Answer:** Funding can only be provided to individuals that own the home and property to be improved. The property must already have a home with failing septic and/or failing/inadequate well or has a home served by a straight pipe or privy.
19. Can already built publicly owned residential units that share wells and onsite sewage systems, but want to have separate wells and septic serve each unit independently be eligible?
- a. **VDH Answer:** Publicly owned dwellings will not meet the VDH's definition of a family or economic unit and therefore would not meet the income guidelines.
- 20.
21. Are non-residential properties (e.g. restaurants) eligible for SWAP funding?

VDH - Septic and Well Assistance Program

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Version: 4/20/2022

- a. **VDH Answer:** No, non-residential properties do not meet the eligibility criteria of VDH's SWAP to provide funding to homeowners that are at or below 200% of the federal poverty level.
22. Is that Rural Community Assistance Project (RCAP) report, "Still Living without the Basics in the 21st Century" available?
 - a. **VDH Answer:** You can find the document at the following website: <https://www.rcap.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Still-Living-Without-the-Basics-Water.pdf>
23. Can this funding be used for one time Facility Fees required by the service provider?
 - a. **VDH Answer:** Yes, when replacing a failing onsite sewage system with a connection to public sewer, all tap fees and facilities fees can be included for payment.
24. Can partners help a singular homeowner under this program or should we have them contact VDH directly?
 - a. **VDH Answer:** If Partners think that only one home in their area would be interested and do not want to develop a program to try and help many households, then it would be preferable to work with that homeowner and have them apply directly to VDH. If, however, a partner thinks there may be more homeowners that will need assistance and would like some assistance from VDH to pay for the partner's time and effort to locate those homeowners and get them funding assistance, then we encourage you to apply for a Local Partner SWAP grant.
25. We have converted a lot of septic to sewer connection by giving residents the option to pay to do it. The few that have not done it would be due to household income constraints. Is there guidance whether I should just have them reach out directly for Direct Funding or if we should dedicate time to be a Local Partner and manage it ourselves?
 - a. **VDH Answer:** Direct funding would only be available in areas where there is not a Local Partner project active. The idea is the two programs would compliment each other to make sure all of Virginia is covered. The idea is not to have the two programs in conflict with each other. If Partners think that only one or two homes in their area would be interested and do not want to develop a program to try and help many households, then you can direct those homeowners to apply directly to VDH. If, however, a partner thinks there may be more homeowners that will need assistance and would like some assistance from VDH to pay for the partner's time and effort to locate those homeowners and get them funding assistance, then we encourage you to apply and receiving a Local Partner SWAP grant will make more sense.
26. Are costs 100% covered by VDH or is there a cost-share for the homeowner?
 - a. **VDH Answer:** The idea behind either of the programs (Direct Projects or Local Partners) is there should be no cost to eligible homeowners. This includes cost for permit fees, cost to design the systems or costs to install the practices. Either program should be developed in such a way that there are no outward costs to the homeowner (even if it were to be reimbursed).
27. Are local VDH offices currently doing advertising or press releases or outreach to local organizations?
 - a. **VDH Answer:** VDH has not advertised the Direct Funded program except with Local Health Districts and on the SWAP website. An announcement for the Local Partner RFA was sent to about 90 organizations, agencies, localities throughout the commonwealth as well as to all local health departments and posted on our website. VDH does plan to advertise the program once the first set of local partner agreements are in place. It is expected that local partners should develop their own outreach programs.
28. If partners wish to work with local VDH offices for designs, where individuals qualify, how would that work? Will we be better off hiring an AOSE?
 - a. **VDH Answer:** Every local partner project can develop their own process and procedures that work best with the way their organization functions. However, VDH will provide recommendations on processing for local partners receiving funding. This will include working with the local health department to provide design services where available under VDH's

VDH - Septic and Well Assistance Program

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Version: 4/20/2022

[Hardship Guidelines](#). Homeowners that meet the income eligibility for SWAP also meet the income eligibility for direct design services from VDH.

29. Can we use this funding with other funding from the state?
- VDH Answer:** VDH SWAP funds have no restrictions to be partnered with other funding other than VDH SWAP funds would be considered federal funding. When partnering with other funds VDH SWAP funds can only be used for the eligible and qualified costs outlined in the RFA which includes the limit of 35% of the SWAP Local partner RFA on non-BMP funds to complete and administer the SWAP project. SWAP funds can only be used to support the repair/replacement of failing onsite septic systems or, the correction of straight pipes or pit-privies (including connection to public sewer) or the repair/replacement of a failing private well (or connection to public water) or the proper abandonment of unused private wells. As such SWAP funds cannot be used to extend water or sewer lines outside the property boundaries of the qualifying homeowner. These would be considered capital expenditures to extend main or trunk lines and other sources of funding may be better suited to these purposes.
30. If Local Partners expend all of the funds within a health region, can VDH still provide direct funded projects if there is additional need.
- VDH Answer:** VDH has tried to equitably allocate the funds between Health District for both the Direct Project and Local Project Funding. The idea being that the total for the two pots of funding will be at the disposal of qualifying homeowners living in the different Health Regions. If VDH awards funding through a Local Partner RFA to an organization to cover specific health districts and through a successful program they run out of SWAP funding, there are two options available to see that homeowners still have access to SWAP Funding. The Local partner can determine if there is any additional Local Partner funding available for allocation or distribution through current or future RFAs and then submit another application for additional funding. Or the local partner can ask VDH, on behalf of the homeowners in their area, if there are still unallocated Direct Partner funds available in the associated Health Region. Either way if there is unallocated SWAP funds available in either pot for a Health Region, VDH will strive to see that these are made available to homeowners in need. If, however, there is unallocated SWAP funding available in a Health Region (from either Direct Projects or Local Partners) and there appears to be less chance that these funds will be able to be allocated by the December 31, 2024 deadline, then VDH will work through the appropriate and allowable process to see about redistributing these unallocated funds to other Health Regions in need.
31. How do you view heir property where only one heir lives on the property?
- VDH Answer:** To be eligible for assistance under VDH's SWAP an individual, family or economic unit must be at or below the 200% federal poverty level and must own both the house and the land on which the house is situated (and all water/waste systems). The SWAP uses the income verification process outlined in the VDH "Eligibility and Charging Structure Guidance Document" to verify income and determine eligibility. If there are multiple owners, as per an estate, trust or heir property, then those owners would need to meet the definitions of family or economic unit referred to the above referenced guidance and income would be based upon all owners/heirs.
32. What about multiple family dwellings? For example, apartment buildings with multiple low income renters?
- VDH Answer:** To be eligible for assistance under VDH's SWAP an individual, family or economic unit must be at or below the 200% federal poverty level and must own both the house and the land on which the house is situated (and all water/waste systems). Please refer to our website for further guidelines "Eligibility is based upon income verification of the family unit or economic unit that legally owns the home and associated property for which wastewater/water

VDH - Septic and Well Assistance Program Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Version: 4/20/2022

improvements are needed. The SWAP uses the process outlined in the VDH "Eligibility and Charging Structure Guidance Document" to verify income and determine eligibility." If the owner of a dwelling would meet the above referenced criteria/eligibility then they may be eligible regardless of whether one or multiple families rent the residence.

33. Can we get a copy or link to VDH charging structure guidance?
 - a. **VDH Answer:** You can find this document here:
https://townhall.virginia.gov/l/GetFile.cfm?File=C:%5CTownHall%5Cdocroot%5CGuidanceDocs%5C601%5CGDoc_VDH_3190_v2.pdf
34. Will this grant be lump-sum reimbursement or based on performance?
 - a. **VDH Answer:** VDH administers the subrecipient SWAP grants, issued based upon the results of this RFA, on a reimbursement basis upon completion of deliverables and work outlined in the approved work plans.. This means that expenditures occur, the subrecipient pays these expenses, and then requests reimbursement from VDH (time and materials). Requests for reimbursement for allowable costs incurred shall be submitted no more frequently than monthly but no greater than quarterly. VDH only reimburses for BMP costs once there is a certification by VDH that the septic system or well is operational and functioning. Reimbursement for non-BMP costs can be done periodically through the monthly or quarterly reports but must be justified by the programmatic work accomplished.
35. Can the percentages be shifted between counties (in the same region) if more need becomes apparent in one vs another after the program is underway?
 - a. **VDH Answer:** Yes, once an agreement is issued as a result of this RFA which includes a breakdown of funding per Health District that breakdown can be requested to be shifted as long as it doesn't impact the funding amount going to a health region.
36. Would VDH have a list of contractors that partners would have to use ?
 - a. **VDH Answer:** No, there is not a list of contractors that VDH maintains that would have to be used by partners. VDH is going to issue a Request for Qualifications for contractors for future bid solicitations. VDH will use this process to review licensures and other required information for contractors. VDH is looking into whether or not VDH can share that pre-qualified list with project partners.
 - b. Here is the breakdown of certifications that VDH is requesting from contractors in our Request for Qualifications.

Sewer Connection	Class A, B, or C Contractor's License from DPOR, plumber's license from DPOR, proof of insurance.
Water Connection	Class A, B, or C Contractor's License from DPOR, plumber's license from DPOR, proof of insurance.
Conventional Onsite Repair	Class A, B, or C Contractor's License from DPOR, Conventional Sewage Disposal System Contracting (CDS) specialty from DPOR, Master Conventional Onsite Sewage System Installer license from DPOR, proof of insurance.

VDH - Septic and Well Assistance Program Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Version: 4/20/2022

Alternative Onsite Repair	Class A, B, or C Contractor's License from DPOR, Alternative Sewage Disposal System Contracting (ADS) specialty from DPOR, Master Alternative Onsite Sewage System Installer license from DPOR, proof of insurance.
Private Well	Class A, B, or C Contractor's License from DPOR, certified Water Well System Provider, proof of insurance.
Alternative Onsite Repair Design	Master Alternative Onsite Soil Evaluator, proof of insurance.

Regarding Class A, B, and C; Class A contractors license is required for a single project that is \$120,000 or more. Class B contractors license is required for a single project that is \$10,000 or more, but less than \$120,000 (we'll mostly be looking for at least Class B). Class C is required for projects over \$1,000 but less than \$10,000.

37. Is there any maximum amount of funding allowed per BMP?
- a. **VDH Answer:** VDH SWAP funds do not necessarily have a cap on the funds available per type of system. There is a soft cap of over \$40,000. Projects that exceed that cost may require further review and approval by the VDH SWAP program. However, making sure the prices paid are reasonable and are based upon competitive bids will be expected (as is any time working with federal funds). One of the key points of the program is to maximize the funding that can go to homeowners to fix failing onsite septic systems and private wells. the efficiencies garnered by using the most economically practical solutions while being fully protective of human health and the environment is encouraged
38. Only single family residential units are eligible, correct ?
- a. **VDH Answer:** If a homeowner meets the definition to apply (income of family/economic unit at or less than 200% FPG and owns the home, land and water/waste systems) and the home in question is not a single family establishment but something different that houses people (e.g duplex or triplex) and the family/economic owns the entire property, then it is potentially eligible.
39. Would a project involving a community of several residents (say a mobile home park) be an eligible project?
- a. **VDH Answer:** To participate in the Local Partner funding the applicant organization needs to be a legally recognized group, organization, with the appropriate federal and station identification numbers (e.g. financial identifier number, DUNS, etc.). Any of the homes to receive water or waste improvements needs to be owned by an individual/family or economic unit that are at or below 200% of the federal poverty level. These homeowners must own the home, the land the home sits on and the waste/water systems to be improved. If the group of residents meet that definition then they could apply for a local partner grant. If the homeowners do not qualify as a group in order to apply for local partner funding the individual homeowners

VDH - Septic and Well Assistance Program Frequently Asked Questions. (FAQ)

Version: 4/20/2022

that meet the eligibility criteria could apply separately to VDH as part of the Direct Projects funding.